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Christianity and Personal Problems: No. 3

VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

HOW CHRIST HELPS A MAN TO ACHIEVE CHARACTER

BY

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VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

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I: THE MAKER OF MEN

The world's great need today is for men. In every walk of life, in every land, in the face of every great human need, and every open door of opportunity, men are wanted. Men of character and leadership were never more needed than at this hour of the world's history. And yet we look at so many unsatisfied and defeated lives around us and see the wavering, irresolute, unformed characters of men who have not found themselves. And if we look within at our own broken resolutions, our unfulfilled hopes and aspirations, our divided wills, we would fain cry,

> "Oh, for a man to arise in me
> That the man I am may cease to be."

But how are we to become the men we wish to be? How are we to change ourselves and lift the dead weight of our own weakness and failure? How can we undo the past, conquer the present, and claim the future? What reasonable hope is there of change when we have failed so often and have made so little conquest of life? If we have failed ourselves, is there anyone to whom we may turn as a maker of manhood? Is there any power or person who can create within us a great ideal, reenforce our weak wills and lead us to the attainment of character and the realization of our deepest longings?

In the opening of that first fresh gospel of the early days in Galilee, throbbing with a new hope, ringing with the glad sense of abounding good news, we hear the call of a young prophet who dares to attempt the impossible, who proclaims his program as a maker of men.

"Come ye after me and I will make you——" These four words seem to start from the page—"*I will make you.*"

Let us think first how, under God, *he made himself.*[1] Here was a babe lying in a manger—and a coarse man goes down the dark alley with a laugh that a baby had been born in a stable! How little he knew, for it did not yet appear what

[1] As in the King James and Revised Versions, pronouns referring to God or Christ are not printed in capitals.

this child should be. The world slept on, though the air was still tremulous with the song,

"Glory to God, in the highest,
And on earth peace among men."

That babe was to stretch out his hands to touch and transform the three great races of his day—to the bigoted Jew and transform his religion; to the philosophizing Greek and show him the highest truth; to the proud ruling Roman and lead him to plant the cross in place of the Roman eagles. That babe was to stretch out his hands to great continents and transform them—to Asia and the ancient East; to savage Europe, some day not only to civilize but to Christianize even that warring continent; to America and the New World as Columbus was to launch out on the western ocean fixing the Cross of Christ to the prow of his caravels.

He made himself with a character so divine and godlike that you can take every characteristic of his and transfer it to God without any sense of sacrilege or unfitness, finding in him always the highest attributes of deity. If only God is like Jesus, it is all we can ask or think. If only he is as loving, as self-sacrificing, as forgiving as Jesus, we can ask no more. This man is so divine that humanity falls down at his feet like doubting Thomas and cries, "My Lord and my God."

And yet he is so human, so near and dear to us, that he comes closer to us than any character in history. He is a son of man, universal man, our very brother and helper and friend. Yet under God he achieved this character, he grew into the full stature of this human personality, thought by thought, act by act, choice by choice, by means that were simple and natural and within our own reach. For he was absolutely human, a man among men, as truly human as we, hungry, thirsty, tired, tempted, battling with poverty and heartbreak.

Notice the simple means by which his human character was formed. Turn and read the great habits of his life, where it is recorded three times, "as his custom was," "as his custom was," "as he was wont." First of all, "He entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue" and read again the Scriptures that had so powerfully shaped his own life during those thirty silent years. A few years ago the writer stood in that little synagogue of Nazareth and saw a Jewish boy about twelve years of age poring over the roll of the prophets. There was another little boy years ago in the same synagogue of Nazareth, too poor to own his own copy of the Scriptures, poring over the rolls of the law and the psalms and the prophets, and

drinking in their message until he had himself become the truth, who was the truth. He quotes in his discourses as recorded in Matthew's gospel alone, some fifty-eight times from seventeen of those great books of the old covenant, and all through his teachings there break out from the Psalms, Isaiah, and the minor prophets those truths hidden away in his heart in the silent years at Nazareth.

"As his custom was," he lived and had his being in the sacred Scriptures. Like daily manna to his hungry soul, as the very bread of life, as the strength and nourishment of his character, he fed upon the word of God. He could not own even a copy of the Old Testament, while we with the gathered treasures of the race in the Old and New Testaments often daily neglect this priceless means of growth.

"As his custom was," he went to the Mount of Olives to pray, "for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples." This was the second great habit of his life. As the Scriptures were his daily bread, prayer was the very breath of his life, the breathing his soul in God. There in the hidden years at Nazareth on the little hill behind the town, he looked away to the sea and over the scenes of Israel's history that lay before him on the plain below. In the school or at the carpenter's bench, in the synagogue or temple, in the noisy street or in the quiet home, his soul rested in unbroken communion with his Father. And this simple habit of prayer, this fellowship with the Father moment by moment, hour by hour, task by task, and trial by trial, may become normal and natural in our lives as well.

And there was a third great habit of his life, that of service. "As he was wont, he taught them again." He simply went about doing good, speaking one kind word after another, to man by man, interview by interview, but each one bearing the touch of the divine, as he poured out his life in telling the glad news of the love of God.

Here then are three simple habits that lie within your reach and mine.[2] As his custom was he read the Scriptures, as his custom was he prayed, and as his custom was he served. Here are three simple habits of Bible study, prayer, and the kindly service of men. It was thus he made himself, and in the same path he calls to us, "Come ye after me, and I will make *you*."

Let us think, in the second place, not only of how he made himself, but how *he made the circumstances of his life,* how he molded them, transformed them, transcended them. He was never the victim of circumstance. Nothing to him came

[2] Luke 4:16; 22:39; John 18:2; Mark 10:1, 29, 44, 45.

too early or too late. His life moved from a distant center, it expressed the rhythm of an inner harmony. In every common day, in sunshine or shadow, in gladness or gloom, he could love God and grow in his likeness and serve his fellow men. Fairbairn states that there are six factors that contribute to the making of a man, or six tests by which you can judge a character in history: his race and family, his time and place, his education and opportunity.

How mean, how poor and pathetic were the circumstances of the life of Jesus! Let us note first his race and family. His race was probably the most bigoted, the most provincial, the most hated and persecuted in all the world. And yet, as a root out of dry ground, comes this one universal man, appealing equally to East and West, uniting Orient and Occident, making all nations to sing,

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love."

His family could offer him only the slender opportunity of a humble village carpenter's home, and yet for all time, he fills with new content the words, "father," "son," and "brother," and widens the conception of the family to that of a universal Kingdom.

And note again the cramped circumstances of his life in regard to his time and place. He is born in despised Galilee of the Gentiles. There in that outlying, conquered, miserable little Jewish province, his life is confined. In that "least of all lands," less than fifty by one hundred and fifty miles in extent, smaller than many of our counties and less than a single state, he had to live his life. And how straitened he was in time. He was permitted less than three years of public life. Socrates taught for forty years; Plato for fifty; Aristotle lived long and wrote many volumes, filling libraries with his learning, with the gathered wisdom of the world of his day. But this simple peasant carpenter had less than three years in which to accomplish his work. He left not a book, not a tract, not a written page behind him. His public activity is crowded into little more than two years, and yet he transcends time and founds an eternal Kingdom. His life reaches to the eternities. In the eternal *now* he stands and says, *"I am."*

Do not say you have no time. You have all the time there is. If you have frivoled away and wasted the first eleven hours of the day you will not have adequate time in the hour that is left. But are there not twelve hours in the day? You have all the time that any man ever had, all the time he had.

Like our Master, let us redeem the time and live today, one hour at a time of duty done and tasks fulfilled, till time is conquered and our crown is won.

Let us note again his education, how limited it was. "How knew this man letters, having never learned?" He had only the simple village school of a peasant carpenter's son. And how limited was his opportunity. In a conquered province, among a crushed people, under an oppressive legalism where every innovation and originality was considered treason to the code of a burdensome tradition, jealously opposed and hated by scribes and Pharisees, priests and Levites, betrayed by Jews and crucified by Gentiles, his life is cut off before his life-work seemed scarcely begun.

Note the strange contrasts and contradictions of his life. He was no scholar, and yet he alone in the religious sphere challenges the universal attention of human scholarship and of the world's great thinkers. He alone in the realm of the spiritual demands the allegiance of the students of the world. Many of us belong to the Young Men's Christian Association, to a Student Christian Movement, or the World's Student Christian Federation. There is no World's Student Buddhist or Confucian or Hindu or Mohammedan Federation. The very idea would be impossible. One alone can unite or seriously challenge the allegiance of the students of the world in the religious realm.

He was no scholar, yet he challenges the thought of the centuries. The world has not even yet penetrated to the heart of his teaching nor sounded the depths of his thought. He was no scholar, and yet education springs up in his train, wherever the Gospel is carried with the open Bible. Almost universal education for native-born children obtains in practically every Christian country that has an open Bible today. On the mainland of the continent of Asia as a whole only one in one hundred of the population is in school.

Jesus was no writer, and yet his sayings are upon every tongue and his words have gone out to the ends of the world. They are read today in more than six hundred languages around the entire world, and form the one universal book of humanity. No one has ever gone into the heart of Africa to translate Socrates or Plato, Aristotle or Bacon, Shakespeare or Browning, but hundreds have died to carry his priceless words to the world. Scores of languages have been reduced to writing in order to embody his message; savage tribes have been uplifted, cannibals civilized, nations changed, peoples

educated, schools and colleges founded, as the result of the influence of the book which records his life and teaching.

Or, if we turn from the educational to the esthetic sphere, think again how cramped were the limitations of his life. There were only the little hill behind the town, the fields and the flowers, the stars and the birds. He was no artist, and yet the great masterpieces of the centuries are dedicated to him. Raphael, Leonardo, and Michael Angelo seem to reach their height under the inspiration of his creative touch.[3] He was no architect, and yet the great cathedrals of the world were erected for his worship. The carpenter of Nazareth has somehow become the master-builder of time. St. Sophia and St. Peter's, Milan and Cologne, Canterbury and Rheims, with other masterpieces of architecture for nineteen centuries have been erected for his praise. The whole life of a people, the ideals of a generation or a nation are built into the great Christian cathedrals of past centuries.

He was no poet, and yet he makes poetry the possession of the common people and brings it into the home, the market place, and the common round of daily life. Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Browning, Tennyson, Whittier, and a host of modern writers have been inspired by him. He was no musician, and yet Haydn and Handel, Beethoven and Bach, Wagner and Mendelssohn reach their highest flights in the hymns and symphonies and oratorios to his praise.

Or, let us think not only of his educational and esthetic limitations but of the limited social opportunities of his life. He was no social dreamer, yet he creates a social conscience, a social dynamic, a social drive, a mighty growing, widening, and deepening social movement, which after sixty generations is still gaining momentum and is becoming the mightiest social force in human life. Who then is this, who, as Washington Gladden says, plants a social standard on the further side of twenty centuries, and bids kings, law-givers, prophets, and statesmen march on with all their hosts until they attain it?

He was no physician, and yet in his name a mighty ministry of healing has gone out into all the world. Medical missionaries in hundreds of hospitals are healing millions of patients among the poor and ignorant and despised of the earth. Even in a world at war, the sick and the dying are cared for beneath the sign of his cross. This very cross, the world's token of deepest shame and infamy, he transforms

[3] See "My Lord and Savicur, Jesus Christ," by J. Frank Manly, to whom we are indebted here.

into the symbol of humanity's deepest sacrifice and highest hope.

He had no wealth. He possessed nothing himself, and yet fortunes are flung at his feet, and his spirit guides the philanthropic giving of the world today. He champions the cause of the poor and arouses the conscience of the rich. His influence is leading men to a new social relation, to a new conception of stewardship, to a larger and more generous giving and sharing of the benefits of life.

He had no home, yet he creates the Christian home and secures its sanctity and its safety. He had no child, and yet he becomes the Saviour of childhood and teaches us the lesson which we are only beginning to learn after lagging centuries, the priceless value of the little child. The modern mind is just beginning to fathom and to understand from him the preciousness of childhood. He was no woman, he had no wife, yet he becomes the Saviour of womanhood. In no non-Christian religion does womanhood come fully to its own or rise to the sublimity of its high calling. Not one of all the five hundred million women in Asia has, or fully can have, her God-given rights, apart from the Gospel which Jesus has brought for the redemption of womanhood.

Who then is this? Merely a carpenter, a peasant from Nazareth? If so, we ought to be turning out better men every year after nineteen centuries of civilization, progress, and culture—from Yale and Harvard, from Oxford and Cambridge, from city and country life. And yet he towers in sheer moral grandeur, the one central figure of human history, the one commanding character of all time.

Let us not forget out of what painful and cramped limitations and surroundings he made himself and the circumstances of his life. You will never have to face such limitations as he did. Yet he never complained of his circumstances, he did not struggle with the men who drove the nails into the cross. He did not strive with Pilate or hate Judas. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Once in the history of the world there was an awful miscarriage of justice. Here was the one great tragedy; the one life that held the world's hope was cut off by a cruel death. All his high aims and ideals ended in a cross of shame, in a felon's death. If he could take that awful wrong, that suffering, shame, and death and transform it into the world's hope and glory and salvation, if he could change *that,* why then he can change anything. Through him our philosophy of life may be, "We know that to them that love God, all things work together for good." If

you really believe this, you need never quarrel with your circumstances nor complain of your weaknesses or limitations. It is the cup which your Father has given you. Accept the circumstances of life as God-given. Make them or take them as they are, for he says, "Come after me and I will make *you.*"

In the third place, let us note that he made not only himself and the circumstances of his life, but *he made the places that he touched.* Bethlehem was but a little obscure, prosaic, shepherd village; now, all the world sings,

"Oh, little town of Bethlehem!"

We stood there in the Judean village where the little inn once stood. The spot is marked by a stone, bearing a silver star with the words, "Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born." As we stood in silence on that sacred spot, an old peasant woman from the snows of far-away Russia approached, with deep reverence and awe. She thought she was alone, and came creeping forward and knelt and kissed the spot. Then she brought her little girl also to kneel and kiss that spot. There today we see womanhood and childhood kneeling and worshipping at that cradle of Bethlehem.

He made Nazareth. It was a town so squalid and proverbially bad that it had become a byword, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" We were deeply moved as we gazed upon the little town. After a long day's travel, we turned the shoulder of the hills that had hid it from view and looked across the valley to that little squalid town where he had spent the greater part of those thirty precious years on earth. Somehow we could not see it through our tears. We thought of those hidden years at Nazareth and of the human life of God that was lived there.

He made Nazareth. He even made the wilderness, where for forty days, gaunt and hungry, he fought back the great temptations of his life. But after that dreadful conflict he returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. Tempted and hungry, he comes back with power enough to save a defeated humanity.

Jerusalem he makes sacred as the world's place of pilgrimage. He sees it as "the city of the great King." Even Golgotha, the place of a skull, of putrefying flesh and whitened bones, he transforms into Calvary, the most precious spot on earth to us, for there he died.

We call this the Holy Land. Why was it holy? Witness its squalor today. One man said: "I cannot believe it. Do you mean to tell me that if God came to earth, he would come

to a place like this, here in this dirt? It is impossible!" Yet Christ made it a Holy Land, the world's place of pilgrimage. So it was with every place he touched. It was he that made it holy.

What are you and I doing for the places in which we live, our city or state or nation? What are you doing for your college or school or the place where you spend the summer? Think of that poor old farm away in Northfield, too rough for wheat or corn land, just a bit of waste pasture. Moody made it. How beautiful is that spot today, looking down the Connecticut valley at sunset, where year by year hundreds of students caught the vision of a new world and rose to the high calling of their life-work in distant lands. But who made Moody? It was one who said to a little boy with his poor mother in the white house on the hill, "I will make you, Dwight Moody." That poor country boy rose up to follow him and today that old farm is crowned with those splendid buildings, and out from Northfield and from Mt. Hermon pour hundreds of lives that are helping to make the nations. Out from that place many of us have gone with blessing because a little boy, Dwight Moody, heard him say one day, "I will make *you;* come and follow Me."

"I will make you," says this Maker of manhood. Manhattan Island, of New York, was bought from the Indians for twenty-eight dollars. It is worth several billions today, and has not yet reached its full and final value. Your life is like Manhattan Island. You are as yet only a fraction of the man you might be. What could he not do with your life if you would let him make you and mold you?

Jesus made every place that he touched. You are going somewhere for the summer and you will pass this way but once. Are you going to frivol the vacation away, hanging in a hammock and killing time? Henry Wright went to the little village where he lived and before the summer closed it was swept by a revival. Jesus made every place that he touched.

But Jesus not only made himself, his circumstances and the places that he touched; *he made men.* He stood one day before Simon, the fickle one. He looked into his very soul, deep beneath all the blunders and cursing and swearing, beneath all his fickleness and weakness, and said to him, "I name you a rock, and upon this broken rock I will build for eternity." He made Simon into Peter, a man weak as water into one strong as a rock. He looks down beneath your weakness, your failure, your temptation and sin, and says, "I will make you a new man."

A little further along he finds James and John, the "sons of thunder" who would call down fire from heaven to blast the villages that withstood them. And yet he makes this "son of thunder" into John, the apostle whom he loved, leaning on his breast at supper. He finds Zacchaeus, a miserable, low-minded publican, a hard money-lending Jew, who spends an hour with him and under his creative touch becomes the first philanthropist. With new vision and an abandon of generous impulse he cries: "The half of my goods I will give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I will restore him fourfold." The selfish man becomes generous, as Jesus teaches him the glad ministry of giving, the higher stewardship of life.

Next he finds an outcast woman by a well, a poor, sordid, sunken, hopeless creature, a public character in her village. And down into that fallen, darken, sodden life he looks and sees a well of living water within that soul, a well-spring of hidden possibilities bursting into being before the vision of faith, at the touch of love. He sees vast hidden potencies in her life. With longing and eagerness before the spectacle of her wasted life, he cries, "If thou knewest the gift and the giver—if you only knew what you are missing—if thou knewest, thou wouldest ask, and I would give." And then he uttered those living words that have come down through the centuries: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life."

If the reader will pardon a personal word, I remember a day twenty-seven years ago when that verse broke into my life like a pent-up rushing stream that had burst its dam. It was the darkest day of my life. I was suffering from nervous prostration and insomnia. My work was a failure and I was discouraged and rebellious. The whole world looked black—and blue. That morning I cried to God and asked him to show me the way out, for somehow I had missed the way. My life had been filled with overwork, rather than over-flow. It had been one of strain and worry and not of peace and joy. Somehow I had missed the glad good news of the larger life, but that day he showed a very fountain of life-giving joy, the fountain of life itself. And this is what he said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." On that morning twenty-seven years ago I began to drink of the deeper springs of life. Before, I had been drinking of those "broken cisterns

that can hold no water." I had gone across Europe in search of pleasure, yet somehow happiness had always eluded one. I was not satisfied and I knew that something was wrong. I had been serving two masters, God and mammon, Christ and self. But that day I came back to the fountain of the life of God in Jesus Christ. There have been failures since. One could spend many pages in telling of these failures, but he on his side has kept his promise these many years. For in all the years since that morning, by his grace, there has not been one hour of despair, not an hour of darkness. There have been intellectual problems that one could not solve, the pressure of the problem of evil, the problem of pain and human suffering and unjust social conditions, but at the center there has always been a satisfying certainty of peace and joy. So full and so satisfying has his presence been, so constant and growing, that the doubts and difficulties and problems seem to lie out on the fringes of life. One thing I know, that God satisfies. Sick or well, at home or absent, in apparent success or apparent failure, so long as we drink and keep drinking we shall never thirst.

He does not say, "whosoever drank" back at this student conference or that convention. He does say, "Whosoever drinketh." We drink the well once for all. The source of life is then within—daily, hourly, and moment by moment we keep drinking of the fountain of living water that is now within us.

Thus Jesus "as his custom was" lived daily in the word of God, daily in prayer, daily in service. This new life is just as natural as drinking, or as breathing. And what will heaven itself be? Surely not just golden streets, nor a changed environment, nor angels and harps, but the very presence of God himself. Yet we have him here and now. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," and could we but see it, it lies about us still. It is not withdrawn from us, but we have withdrawn from it. Let us set our minds once again on the things that are above and we shall find that heaven is here. Will not the wonder be in the life beyond that down here where we so needed him, down here where the world was so dark, here where we so desperately needed power, we did not see him? He is here. God is here and every common bush is aflame with him. "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Can you not in simple faith, rest on his promise of John 4:14, just begin to drink today, that is, to take life from him as simply as you breathe, as naturally as you take your daily bread? And as *his custom* was, even so will not

you daily in the Word of Truth and in prayer and in the glad service of men, drink of the very joy of life?

> "Forenoon and afternoon and night; forenoon
> And afternoon and night; forenoon and—what?
> The empty song repeats itself. No more?
> Yea, that is life: make this forenoon sublime,
> This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
> And time is conquered, and thy crown is won."

Jesus made or molded every life that yielded to his influence. At his touch Saul becomes Paul. A moral miracle takes place in the life of this persecutor, "breathing out threatening and slaughter." Here is the man who stood by sternly at the stoning of Stephen, who becomes as tender as a woman, gentle as a little child, writing his epistles with many tears. He who changed Saul, the persecutor, into Paul the apostle, can change your hard heart or mine.

Augustine, the godless and profligate young student of philosophy, the slave of passion, weak of will and fickle as the wind, constantly making and breaking new resolutions, in an hour becomes a new man. This man, unsurpassed in sin, becomes the great saint and bishop, the great writer and preacher of his day. As he hears the words, "Take and read," he responds to the message in the Scriptures that is to change his life, and enters upon these three great habits—daily Bible study, prayer, and service—which make him the great power of his century.

Francis, the young libertine of Assisi, godless and hopeless, turns from his life of revelry and passion, as he hears the call "Come after me," and rises up to follow this master Maker of manhood. He gathers twelve young men about him, who catch the spirit of him who now possesses his life. They go out in poverty, in joy and song, sleeping in the streets, working with the peasants in the fields, preaching to the poor, pouring out their lives in tireless service for the people. Declining the offices and titles of kings and cardinals, of popes and princes; living with lepers, healing the sick, ministering to the poor—they live to the full, till all Italy turns to them. Those twelve young men had let him make and mold them as he would.

He finds George Whitefield in the Bell Tavern of Gloucester, who hears the words, "Come after me, George Whitefield, and I will make *you* a fisher of men." He rises up at his call to become the flaming evangelist of England, Scotland, and America.

A crude country boy hears his call, "Come after me, George

Williams," as one night that hand is laid upon him with its transforming touch. The country boy stands on the great bridge of London and looks at the city, seething with temptation and sin. He, too, gathers twelve young men about him and founds the Young Men's Christian Association, and as a result today a vast organization of more than a million young men in forty lands is striving to realize the power of this Maker of men. This country boy had less opportunity, less education, less gifts, than many students and members today of this organization which he founded, but have we yielded to the full these lives of ours to the mighty power and passion of his life?

Not only to these great leaders of the past, not only to men like George Whitefield and George Williams, but to you as well, his call comes today, Come after me and I will make *you.* "There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves and two fishes." It is hardly worth mentioning—just a boy with the latent energies of his life unawakened, just a young man with all his hidden potencies lying dormant, with talents undeveloped, gifts unused, powers unsuspected. Here is a young man drifting, with no high aim, ideal, or ambition. He has not yet found himself, he has not yet discovered the meaning of life. Here is a man who has not won the fight for character, who has not found victory over sin, who is living in defeat, amid the wreck of his own broken resolutions. Here is a young man in doubt. He is not sure of himself, or of God, or of man, or of the meaning of life. But you, too, may come just as you are, with all your doubts, so long as you begin with an honest heart. Start somewhere, believe something, whatever you honestly can. Strive to live up to the light that you have and begin today. When those first fishermen rose up to follow him, how much did they know, how much did they believe, how long was their creed? Just as they were, in all their need and doubt, they rose up to follow him, and they have been following ever since. Here is a life that is thirsty, unsatisfied, its possibilities undreamed and unrealized. "Lord, there is a lad here." The Master replies, "Bring him to me."

There is a voice today that calls us o'er the tumult, "Come after me and I will make you."

You are today just a fraction of the man you might be. Will you yield to him this day in full and glad surrender, all your life, all that you are, all that you have, and all that you hope to be?

"Just as I am, thine own to be,
Friend of the young, who lovest me,
To consecrate myself to thee,
O Jesus Christ, I come.

In the glad morning of my day,
My life to give, my vows to pay,
With no reserve and no delay,
With all my heart I come.

I would live ever in the light,
I would work ever for the right,
I would serve thee with all my might;
Therefore, to thee, I come.

Just as I am, young, strong and free,
To be the best that I can be
For truth, and righteousness, and thee,
Lord of my life, I come."

II: MORAL MASTERY[1]

Sin seems to be the living on a lower instead of a higher plane of life, for the lower self instead of the higher. If this is so, the secret of victory over sin will be found not in violently overcoming the lower desires but in lifting life to a higher level, not in repression of the lower but in expression of the higher, not in seeking to eradicate evil but in overcoming it with good, not in morbidly dwelling upon our sins but in forgetting ourselves in the abandon of a great quest and in seeking first the highest aim of life.

Psychologists who deal with abnormal behavior, say it arises usually from the repressing of the great natural instincts of life. For illustration, man has the instincts of pugnacity and of sex. These are not, as the ascetic morbidly believed, carnal and sinful, but normal inherited instincts, God-given potentialities of life. The instinct of self-assertion and pugnacity may be wrongly developed in the street fighter or gunman, or realized as a great driving power in a Wilberforce as he battles with the slave trade for forty-six years and helps to free, without a bloody war, all the slaves in the British Empire. In the same way the God-given, creative instinct expressed in sex is the basis of much of the highest idealism in life. It may be perverted to vice or crime, morbid introspection, or ingrowing repression that will fester and poison the whole life, or it may be lifted to a higher plane of normal healthy expression.

It must be recognized at the start that here is a great dynamo of power in each man that may be geared for destruction or construction. We must abandon the false and ancient dualism between the sacred and secular, the spiritual and physical.

Modern psychologists show that for moral victory we need not primarily struggle for repression, but "sublimation" and expression. By sublimation we mean giving realization to a normal instinct on a higher plane, or if repressed in one way giving a new channel of expression in another way that is good. It is the foregoing a lower, limited, immediate gratification of desire, for a nobler, richer, more

[1] Selections from Facing the Crisis, Chapter X.

lasting satisfaction on a higher level of life. Thus sex is the physical basis of many of the highest and finest developments in life. It is normal, natural and of divine origin. For "God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them. And God blessed them . . . and God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." From this God-given basis of sex, when developed on the higher, spiritual plane, springs love, manhood, womanhood, the home, the family, fatherhood, motherhood, our very conception of God as "Father," parental care, sacrifice, service, chivalry, the love of beauty, art and much of our highest experience in morality and religion. Let us not therefore look upon that which God has blessed as common, or unclean, or as some secret, hidden thing.

Do not retire to a cave or monastery to "mortify the flesh," but in healthy social life forget the struggle by losing yourself in service, in a great enthusiasm for a goal so high that the lure of the lower life will appear loathsome and morally impossible. Jesus' way of life and his quest of the Kingdom of God, will afford the most successful antidote for the lower life. There will come times, however, of choice and of struggle, as when Jesus retired to the wilderness to have it out once for all with certain temptations, and then, consumed by a great purpose and dominated by a major choice, lived on such a high plane that all the lower attractions were excluded and exposed as false denials and contradictions of the true life. We usually fail, not because we do not struggle hard enough, but because we live on the lower levels of life, because we lack the expulsive power of a spiritual dynamic.

We have seen that sin is selfishness, the assertion of self-will against my right relation to God, to myself, to my fellow-man. We have seen that the two basic instincts or tendencies of life, hunger and love, when undeveloped or perverted manifest themselves in selfishness and lust. These correspond to two prevailing types of temptation, sins of disposition rooted in selfishness, and sins of appetite rooted in lust.

In order to study the psychology of temptation, we may take as typical of the latter the illustration of Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, or the progressive steps in David's fall.[2] St. Augustine sums up the psychology of sin in four words—"A look, a form, a fascination, a fall."[3]

[2] Genesis 25: 29–34; Hebrews 12: 16. II Samuel 11: 1–5, 14–17, 12: 1–15.
[3] "Imago, cogitatio, delectatio, assensio."

We may trace the psychology of Esau's temptation in these four successive steps.

ATTENTION.

There is first the concentration of attention on the object of his selfish appetite, upon a partial not a true end, upon the pottage rather than the birthright. Upon this fine edge of attention turns the quivering scale of life, for "what gets your attention gets you." We become like what we look at. The stream of thought is controlled by sensation from without and the law of association within the mind. The whole trend of life is determined by the direction of attention—"whoso looketh," directing his attention to the lustful and low, commits sin.

IMAGINATION.

Attention leads to the forming of a mental picture thrown into the foreground of the clamorous and imperative present, offering the promise of immediate gratification. By filling the mental screen and concentrating the focus of the mind on immediate gratification, the man becomes blind to the possible life-long loss of the birthright of character, of happiness and of real life. Every temptation is at bottom a lie, a false promise. And it begins in the mind. Here we stand or fall. "All character begins in thought; and all thought tends to action." As you think, so you will do.

DESIRE.

Attention and imagination arouse the strength of desire, deep-rooted back in habit and heredity, in man and in the brute. Desire rises, clamorous to possess and to satisfy itself. It gains strength by concentrating attention on its object, until the man is finally swept past "redemption point" in the Niagara current above the falls, and is lost in the roaring torrent that dashes over the precipice of sin.

CHOICE.

By the concentration of attention, by the false picture of imagination, by aroused desire, gradually thought by thought, the man gives way, by growing familiarity, by compromise, till the will has yielded. It is not usually by one decisive conscious choice that a man falls, but by a gradual transition in the choice of the lower evil which gives the false promise of satisfaction.

Thus Esau despised his birthright and went on his way in the disgust of satiety, for appetite is long and satisfaction is short, and the glutting of the momentary desires of the lower appetites can never satisfy the higher and eternal demands of man's nature which is essentially spiritual. Thus Esau reënacts the scene pictured in the Garden of Eden which is repeated in the tragedy of every disillusioned life. How different sin looks before and after it is committed! Temptation is first suggested as "good for food," "pleasant to the eyes," and "to be desired to make one wise"; but after the man's fall the hideous lie stands out in its true colors as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."[4] Instead of promised "food" one finds the disgust of satiety; the "delight to the eyes" gives place to the shame of sin; and instead of wisdom, man finds folly, misery and death. Human history on its negative side has been one long disillusionment of a prodigal humanity feeding on husks. Once and for ever, *every temptation is at bottom a lie.* It is a series of false promises. The first lie is, "Just this once, there is no harm"; the second, "Once more, and then I will swear off"; the third, "Now I have fallen I might as well go for a sheep as a lamb"; the fourth, "Now I have failed there is no hope, what is the use of trying again?" Each is false and leads to further sin. The only safeguard for a credulous humanity is to know the truth, and the truth shall make us free.

When once a man has fallen, what are the results of sin? In its nature, sin is rebellion against God and it results in alienation or separation from him. It weakens the character and tends to a disintegration of the integrity of the personality. Even if forgiven, the man reaps what he sows and he is not the man he would have been had he not fallen. Further, sin robs a man of power for service. It leaves him a blinded and impotent Samson just when his fellow-men need a deliverer and a leader. It results in the loss of happiness to the individual, and finally in social misery. It is the blighting and blasting of human life.

If such are the results of sin, of which we all know something in experience, what is the psychology of victory? It lies, in a word, in "the expulsive power of a new affection." One impulse can only really be displaced by another. Victory depends on our habits of life, upon our master purpose and its expulsive power, upon the clear vision this gives us of the false lure of the lower alternatives. But in the formative crises of choice, in the inevitable times of struggle, victory

[4] Genesis 3: 6 and I John 2: 16.

turns chiefly on the single fact of attention. Here is the secret of victory in a nut-shell—*the will to attend to the good.* But the will may be weak and well-nigh impotent unless motivated by some dominant affection, ideal, or relationship. Only when ideas are touched with emotion do they become dynamic ideals. Only a higher love will expel the lower lust. As Dr. Richard Cabot says, "Passion can be mastered only by intenser passion. By consecration of the affection we gain victory over the lower impersonal affection."[5]

President King writes,

"The problem of Christian character is the problem of meeting temptation. That in turn is the problem of self-control. The center of self-control is the will and the center of will is *attention, i.e.,* victory over temptation depends on ability to hold attention firmly fixed on the higher considerations. . . . Do not dally with temptation. Do not tarry in the presence of it. Do not do in thought the act to which you are tempted. The thinking has its immediate bodily effect, its tendency to pass into act. When you dally with temptation, when you see how far you can go in imagination without toppling over the precipice you are simply heating some brain center and getting a thought ready to discharge into act. You are playing with sparks over a powder mine, nay putting your finger on the trigger of a gun and beginning to press it and yet expecting it not to discharge." "The great secret of all living is the persistent staying in the presence of the best."

Temptation makes its appeal not as a cold abstraction but to flesh and blood; and victory will be found for most men not in abstract considerations of virtue, but in the warmth and passion of a personal relationship. Some dominant affection must be found stronger than the lure of the lower appetite. Victory is sometimes found over a particular temptation in the human relationship of "falling in love."

> "The thoughts ye cannot stay with brazen chains,
> "A girl's hair lightly binds."

But as a matter of historic fact, the chief impetus for moral victory has been found in a vital, personal relationship to Jesus Christ. In four words we may describe the psychology of victory as we have that of sin.

1. Attend to Christ; "looking away from all else unto Jesus

[5] "What Men Live By." Richard C. Cabot.

the author and finisher of our faith."[6] Beholding him, we are changed into the same image from character to character. We become like what we habitually behold. A man who looks at obscene pictures rouses the impure within himself. The men who associated with Jesus became strangely like him. Sin is caused by a narrowing of consciousness to the point of self-gratification. Its corrective will be in a widening of consciousness to take in one's whole birthright and the larger realities of life; or in the moment of crisis, by a concentration upon that which has the greatest moral expulsive power in life. In the actual experience of Christians that power will be found to be in Jesus himself.

2. Imagine Christ, his presence, his love, his purity, the kingdom of life and happiness and victory which he offers to realize in our experience, and the bitter misery of shame and defeat and death that result from sin. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

3. Arouse the love of Christ in your heart, not as an empty emotion, but as a mighty constraining impulse against sin, combining all the motive of the love of God and the ability to serve our fellow-men if we overcome. "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified."

4. Strengthen the will and reënforce it by that act which is found to have the largest expulsive power for good in your life, whether it be the reading of scripture, or prayer, or by realizing the presence of Christ. Choose Christ decisively, then count the issue closed and yourself as "dead to sin" as a moral impossibility. Protracted dallying with temptation and continual longing for the lower gratification leads you into a sensuous state which almost inevitably tends toward its gratification. In the mountains of India we had to live "above the fever line."

All these four can be summed up in a word which epitomizes the experience of Jesus' followers, "He that *abideth* in him sinneth not."[7] That is, he that completely lives his life in him will find that life the expulsive power of a higher affection, excluding and making morally impossible the lower life, so long as we live or abide in him.

We shall never gain moral mastery by isolating one temptation and seeking victory only at that point. Many think that they have only one real temptation, one besetting sin, one problem. If only they had victory here they think that all would be well. But this is not so. You might by a change

[6] Hebrews 12: 1, 2.
[7] I John 1: 5–10, 3: 1–6.

of circumstances have this temptation entirely removed and still be an utterly selfish and defeated man. This besetting sin of yours is merely a symptom of the self that is unsurrendered. What you desire is to be delivered from the discomfort and humiliation, the pain and shame of defeat at this point. What God wants is *you*, yourself. You want to make a record, he wants to make a character. You will never make that character, nor gain the victory at one point by isolating it in a separate compartment of life. God must have all or none. You must surrender your whole self to God. You must lift your whole life up to a higher plane of fellowship with God and service for men. You must gain the expulsive power of a higher affection by committing your whole life to God, in seeking to follow Jesus' way of life. It is not one sin, but your whole character that is at stake. And this will take time and patience. God's will must be your single purpose and passion. "Not every one that saith unto me, 'Lord! Lord!' but he that *doeth* the will of my Father." "Why call ye me 'Lord! Lord!' and *do* not the things which I say?" "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, *do* ye even so unto them." If you want victory at any point, begin a new life of obedience, seeking to do God's will at every point. And as a means to this life of obedience, begin seriously to practice Jesus' three habits of the daily reading of God's word, daily prayer and daily service. Let this new and higher life crowd out the old and lower habits.

Let us make of every temptation a positive opportunity for character. It is not only a lure downward, it is also a call upward. Never be discouraged. This is not a matter of a moment but the permanent central issue of life in the development of character. One victory won and you may become forever a new man. The old psychology said, "a man does what he is"; past character expresses itself in the present act; but the new psychology says with equal truth and more hope, "a man is what he does," the present act determines the future character. Do and you will be, act and you will become, overcome now and you become forever a new man.[8] Like Jesus after his temptation in the wilderness, you will return in the power of the Spirit for a life of spiritual service and strength. In good as well as in evil, "Sow a thought, you reap an act; sow an act, you reap a habit; sow a habit, you reap a character; sow a character, you reap a destiny."

Professor James, in his chapter on Habit, suggests three

[8] H. C. King, "A Rational Fight for Character."

psychological principles which we may well apply to our spiritual life.

1. "In the acquisition of a new habit, or the leaving of an old one, we must take care to launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible.

2. "Never suffer an exception to occur. Each lapse is like the letting fall of a ball of string which one is carefully winding up. It is necessary above all things never to lose a battle. It is surprising how soon a desire will die of inanition if it is never fed. Without unbroken advance there is no such thing as accumulation of ethical forces possible.

3. "Seize the very first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make and on every emotional prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil. Every smallest stroke of virtue or vice leaves its never so little scar. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, 'wiped out.' Such is the testimony of Psychology."

Remember finally, since temptation is so strong that it is beyond your strength, that you need also some spiritual power that is beyond you. Here is the central secret of victory over sin—"He that abideth in *him* sinneth not."[9]

[9] What God has purposed "He is able to perform." "He is able to make all grace abound unto you, that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything," may have victory over every temptation. "He is able to save to the uttermost" every tempted man. "He is able to keep you from falling, to guard you from stumbling." "He is able to make the weak brother stand." And God asks, "Believe ye that I am able to do this" for you? If God is for us, who is against us? See Eph. i. 4; I Thess. iv. 4; iii. 8; v. 23;. II Cor. ix. 8; Heb. vii. 25; Jude 24, I John 3: 6.

III: A MAN'S STRUGGLE

By A. Herbert Gray

Selections from "Men, Women and God." A Discussion of Sex Questions from the Christian Point of View[1]

A great many men are secretly ashamed of the very fact that they have to struggle with temptation in the matter of purity. In an inner chamber of their lives they contend with impure thoughts and impure suggestions, but they try to keep the doors of that chamber shut, and would blush if others knew what goes on there. Yet all healthy and normal men are so tempted. Those who seem to have escaped have generally taken the course of repressing the whole sexual side of their natures, and of shutting their eyes to the sexual facts of life, which is not a wise course. And so, firstly, in view of the task of facing temptation it would be well for us all to realize that temptation itself is not sin. We may expose ourselves to quite unnecessary temptation. We may play with fire. We may be fools, if we will. But some element of temptation is part of our normal lot in life, and we need not blush about it. To the average young man it can truly be said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." In this respect we are all brothers in arms, and I believe the first step towards victory lies in an honest facing of the fact. Let us admit that we are tempted and get openly to the business of understanding how temptation can be conquered.

If a man lives in thought an impure life, and submits himself to exciting suggestions and imaginations, the secretions of his body will be increased, so that he may become subject to very severe strain. And that, if continued, may work nervous damage. But this only means that a continent life requires thought and proper direction. There *need be* no evil effects from continence. We must be quite clear about this point, for so long as we toy in mind with the suggestion that there is any natural necessity for incontinence, we are fatally weakened for our struggle. It is a man's glory to be master of himself, and to maintain his virginity through the years before mar-

[1] Published by Association Press, 347 Madison Ave., New York City.

riage. And he may quite well achieve it, if he will but go the right way about it. No doubt the struggle is much harder for some than for others. No doubt there are reasons in plenty for charity to those who fail. But there is no real reason why any man should not hope and expect to succeed, and a right expectation is the very foundation of success.

Then, secondly, a man would do well to realize one simple physiological truth about his body. That body naturally and regularly secretes semen. But it is not necessary that that semen should be discharged by sexual activity. On the contrary, a large part of it can be reabsorbed by the body and used up in mental and physical activities to the great benefit of the body and the enrichment of life. That is why the ancients taught that Diana is the natural born enemy of Venus. The man who takes plenty of regular exercise employs his vital forces in a way that lessens the strain of his moral conflict. And though it is true that this reabsorption of semen does not completely remove it, Nature has her own method during sleep of readjusting things in a quite harmless way.

From this it follows, of course, that the real secret of a successful struggle for purity lies in living a life full of wholesome and varied activities. Our artistic sensibilities are intimately related to our sexual natures, and by some self-expression through art, or by the sympathetic appreciation of the art of others, we provide an enriching outlet for our natural energies. Social activities and wholesome social intercourse, too, are of the very greatest importance. The sedentary and lonely life is often found quite fatal, and a life in which only male companionships are available is very undesirable. Indeed, it may truly be said that the best way of avoiding undesirable relations with women lies in the cultivation of right and happy relations with them. I suppose more men have been brought through this difficult period owing to the fact that association with women of refined natures made the thought of sexual irregularity seem repulsive, than by any other single force.

But at all costs let us be sure that we live full lives. I heard lately of a man who was so constantly assailed by sexual cravings, and so convinced that in him they were abnormally strong, that he went to consult a psychotherapist. When he had been fully examined it was found that in him sexual cravings were really rather weaker than in the average man, but that in the house of his life they had no rivals, so that he imagined them to be almost all-powerful.

It is when a man allows himself to sit in idleness and indoors

that the fumes of lust are apt to rise up and make the windows dim, till in that stuffy air he lives evilly at least in thought, and is weakened for the problem of defense. But the man who will get out into the bracing open air of life will find his noxious fancies blown away and his mind restored to health.

Then, thirdly, there are certain fairly obvious points in relation to the right management of the body about which doctors are agreed. They really amount in general to the suggestion that we should live a simple and bracing life, and keep brother body in his proper place of subjection all round. Keep your body clean, and do not funk your cold bath in the morning. Avoid luxurious foods, and over-eating of any sort. Get up when you wake up in the morning, and avoid lying in bed half awake. Take plenty of fresh air and exercise every day. And finally, and at all costs, keep absolutely sober. Probably the last of these pieces of advice is by far the most important. It is the unvarnished truth that the vast majority of men who have gone wrong did so for the first time, not when they were drunk, but when liquor had made them reckless and forgetful. The plain truth about alcohol is that it has a twofold effect upon the human constitution. On the one hand it heightens desire, and on the other it lowers self-control. It is that fatal combination that has been the undoing of many a man. On one night of folly men have thrown away that which they may have guarded jealously for years, and not because they were vicious or gross in nature, but only because they allowed the edge to go off their sobriety. Often by the next night they would have given almost anything to be able to live that bit of life over again and live it differently. But it was too late. I know of no argument for temperance that has anything like the weight of this one.

Then, too, a word must be said about the broad jest and the undesirable story.

Many a broad jest is excused because it has in it some savour of real humour; but it would be well for us to ask ourselves deliberately what things we are going to allow ourselves to laugh at. We all laugh at some of the ways of lovers and no doubt we always will. They have beautiful ways, but beyond question some of them are amusing. There is no possible reaction to a girl's persuasion that her boy is pure hero and saint except a smile; and love itself will blend with such smiles.

But it is quite a different thing to bring laughter to bear on love itself, or on marriage, or on the sacramental intimacies that express love. I believe it is a profane thing to do. Our

best instincts call on us to treat these things as sacred. And sacred things are easily spoiled by careless speech. No vulgarities are quite so vulgar as those which, in printed rags and ragged talk, are clustered round marriage. In the name of all that is beautiful and holy let us be done with them.

Further still, a great many broad stories have in them a minimum of humour and a maximum of dirt. By a strange perversity men who are scrupulously clean in body and who have both intellectual and artistic capacities will stoop to defile their tongues with such things. There are few colleges or offices where public opinion entirely forbids them. But they do a deadly work none the less. They cling about the mind with fatal tenacity. They surround the subject of sex with unclean associations. They defile the inner house of life. And it is in that inner house of thought and imagination that the real battle of purity is fought.

Our real task in this part of life is to see sex as a clean and beautiful thing, to be treated with reverence. Thousands of people never achieve this, even though they live respectable and decent lives. And the reason lies in the fact that in their early days vile stories and jokes defiled the whole subject for them.

A similar thing is true of pictures. Some day we shall as a race recover the sense that the form of a woman is one of the most beautiful things in all God's earth. We shall look at the great statues and pictures which do justice to that beauty with no other feelings than thankfulness and joy. But there are very few men who can do that today. What has made it impossible is the existence of pictures of a suggestive kind, which are handed round in furtive ways, and are literally drenched with unclean associations. For which reason it is a real point in connection with a man's struggle that he should have nothing to do with suggestive pictures. Many years ago I had a friend with great intellectual power. He held a position of great responsibility and was widely respected. He also had conspicuous literary gifts, and knew how to work hard and well. But he brought to me the greatest shock I have ever had in my life. When he was well on in the forties he suddenly fell with a crash, and had to fly the country. He was never able to show his face in England again, and died a diseased exile in a foreign land. And all because he had been overtaken by sexual sin of an indescribably shameful kind. The shock he gave me was one of sorrow, for he had been a friend. But it was still more one of amazement that such a thing could have happened to such a man. Later I came to

understand. When his effects were being sold there was found in his study cupboard a great pile of indecent French plays and novels. That was what did it. In secret he had for years debauched his mind, and inevitably in the end his thoughts brought forth fruit. That experience taught me once for all how certain it is that the inner world of thoughts is the real place where a man attains or misses purity.

There is something grim and stern about this business. I confess to a certain wholesome fear in connection with it which I hope never to lose; though fear will never do as our predominating emotion in this respect. But I keep a place for fear—enough of it to drive me to my knees. I have seen boys go wrong at fifteen, and I have seen old men go wrong at sixty. I believe that no man is safe until he is dead. He was no coward, nor had he a licentious past behind him, who confessed that late on in life he had to beat his body and bring it into subjection lest having preached to others he should be a castaway. He knew; and was honest and wise enough to keep up precautions to the end. There is simply no way through this part of life for the man with slack habits and a self-indulgent attitude of spirit. The man who will not stand up and brace himself, who is not game for a fight, and will not endure hardness is never going to make anything fine out of the splendid but difficult enterprise we call human life. And all the time he will need to have his sentinels out. All the time he will need to make sure that he is master in his own house of life, and allows no interloping thoughts or imaginations to run riot there.

But what about religion! The conventional way in which to end a plain talk about any sort of temptation is to say that God can and will help a man in those straits where his own will is too weak, and that through prayer there is a way of escape for us all. I believe all that absolutely. With great gratitude I may say that I know it. Indeed I cannot understand how any man who has been saved from overthrow can fail to see as he looks back on his life that it was just the goodness of God that upheld him. But I have learnt to beware how I tell men and women that by prayer they can get through, though all other means fail. Men who were having to face a severe strain of temptation have come back to me and told me that they had tried the way of prayer and that it had not availed them. The fact is that something far greater than a mere attempt to use prayer as a special device for this special need is required.

We are so made that religion is a divine possibility for all

of us. Indeed, it is more than a possibility: it is a necessity if life is ever to seem complete. Without it all other things fail in the end to hold off attacks of disappointment and ennui. Because we were made with the capacity for it, we cannot be content without it. It may take many years for a man to discover that without religion life is going to be a failure; and it is that discovery that constitutes for many the tragedy of middle life. In early days the varied interests of life carry many through in some sort of satisfaction. And yet even with the young the life that is without religion is of necessity an unbalanced life. Parts of the man or woman concerned are inactive, and the other parts occupy too much of the stage. Till an interest in God—that greatest of all interests—has entered a man's life attention is too much concerned with other things. Till the spirit is awake the body obtrudes itself too much on consciousness. And thus a man fights the battle of purity on wrong terms. There is no interest so cleansing as an interest in God. Nothing so takes a man out of himself as the attempt to face His demands. Nothing is so certain to counterbalance all unruly thoughts as to know and worship Him. No discipline is so bracing and purifying as the discipline of seeking Him.

But this seeking of God means something much greater than the mere attempt to use prayer for a special purpose. It means getting our whole life rightly related to Him. It means subordinating our desires to His will, and seeing our whole life as something to be used for His glory. Religion cannot be made a mere appendage to life. It cannot be kept in an outhouse like a motor bike, to be used when occasion calls. When God comes into a life He comes to rule—and to rule everything. No doubt we are all tempted to resent the surrender of self which is thus asked of us. Instinctively we cry out for our own way. We want to manage our own lives and to plan out our futures in such ways as will please us. Because religion involves discipline and obedience, we are all apt to turn away from it. We may have liked some of the emotions which are associated with worship, and inspired by religious thoughts. But we want to call no one Master—not even God.

So long as that state lasts no one will find religion a help in the battle with temptation. If we faced the truth about ourselves many of us would find that what we really want is to be allowed to live rather worldly and selfish lives and then to be able to bring God in on occasion to save us from certain particular sins which we loathe. But that cannot be.

In other words, the way of escape is to get one's whole life

and one's whole nature rightly related to God. That means the profoundest of all possible readjustments, because it means that instead of putting himself in the centre of every picture, a man puts God there. And when that readjustment has been completed the power of temptation is gone. I would not now say to a man merely that if he will pray he will get the help he needs. I would say that if he is willing for a real spiritual experience he may pass into a new state of being, in which he will fight with success where he used to fail. Religion *will* do all things for you if you give your whole self to it, but it will not fit into life as an occasional resource.

Let no one suppose, however, that consciousness of God has no relation to the sexual side of life. Far from it. What the man who submits to God will find is, firstly, that he is helped to clean and reverent living, and to mastery over his body. But he will also find that when at last real love calls him up into complete companionship of body and soul with a woman he loves, God Himself will enter into that life and become associated with all the emotions and activities which spring from the sex element in our beings. Such men will come to thank God that He made them with sexual powers in their natures. They will thank Him that passion is a fact. They will say with utter conviction that love with all it means both for the bodily and the spiritual life is the greatest of all God's gifts to man.

Only to have experience of that quality a man *must* come to marriage undefiled. That is the fact that makes the struggle worth while. That is what Browning meant when he said it was

> "worth
> That a man should strive and agonize
> And taste a veriest hell on earth
> For the hope of such a prize."

God does not call us men to a meaningless struggle. The fierceness of temptation is *not* mere cruelty. The prizes in this part of life are great beyond all telling. If any man who reads these pages will but brace himself for the struggle and put forth all his manhood in order to win through, the day will come when he and a woman who is dear to him will thank God that he did fight, and will understand that it was abundantly worth while. She is waiting for you out there in the future. She hopes and prays that when you do find her, you will be such a man as can be honoured and truly loved. She probably keeps herself for you, even though you have not yet

met her, with some delicate and shy reserve. You will never really be worthy of all that she will give you, but you may at least prepare for her and yourself a great and holy experience. To know the full beauty of the thing that married life may be is nearly if not quite the greatest of human attainments. To spoil it beforehand is the most pitiful of all pities.

Wherefore get up and fight!

ADDENDUM,

ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG MEN STRUGGLING WITH SELF-ABUSE

It is in this form that sexual temptation comes into the lives of a very great many men, including many able, high-minded men. All the general things already said in this chapter are relevant to your case, but I wish to add some direct words to you because I have acute sympathy with you in your trial.

You ought, of course, to have been warned when you were very young, and then you might have escaped the danger. Possibly you slipped into the habit without at first realizing that it was wrong; and probably now you hate the habit, and even sometimes hate yourself because of it. It is quite likely, too, that false and exaggerated things have been said to you about it and made you miserably afraid.

Now it *is* a bad habit. It is bad because you feel it to be unworthy and rather unclean, and it creates unhappy associations in your mind in connection with sex, which is a very unfortunate thing for you. And it is a perversion. It is an unnatural way of satisfying sexual craving, and, as you know, it leaves psychic disturbance behind it. The one perfect way of satisfying sexual desire is complete union with a woman you truly and honourably love. That leaves behind it a feeling of complete satisfaction and rest. All other ways leave psychic disturbance. Further, this habit often leads to active homosexuality. I hear of men who talk as if homosexuality was quite a normal and right thing with men of a certain type. It is, in fact, *always* a regression. Do get that fixed in your mind. It is an abnormal, unnatural thing which has definite and evil nervous results.

But let me get back to the problem of self-abuse.

The Student Christian Movement lately collected from a number of doctors, psychologists, and other experienced people, a body of valuable truth and suggestions about this matter, and I cannot do better than pass them on to you.

Firstly, what are the facts about its consequences? These

have been exaggerated. Its effects are chiefly psychical. It does not affect the intelligence or weaken mental power. It takes long to weaken the body, and it is rarely, if ever, a cause of insanity.

On the other hand, it does destroy self-respect; it does leave men psychically disturbed, and for that reason it affects consciousness of the presence of God disproportionately quickly as compared with other sins, and produces the feeling of loss of spiritual power. There are, in fact, abundant reasons for desiring deliverance, though there is no reason for panic.

As has been said again and again in this book, our sexual nature is a gift from God, with glorious possibilities in it of enriching experience. That is why it is so very important not to misuse it.

Now if you really want deliverance, you have first to realize that the seat of the trouble and of the cure is in the mind. The content of the mind in ordinary times is even more important than at the crisis. It may be too late then.

You must prepare the ground by resting on God even when you do not feel the need of him. Fill your mind with clean, healthy things, and expel lustful thoughts, even though they may seem to have no special physical effects.

Give full play to your affections—love of family, of friends, of men and women, and children.

Devote your bodily strength, and the life force that is in you, to great positive ends—the service of God and man.

Keep healthy. Here are wise practical details. Take plenty of exercise, but not too much. Men often fail when tired out. Avoid heavy meals—especially late at night. Take cold baths daily. Do not lie in bed after waking. Avoid quacks like the plague. Beware of the reactions that follow emotional excitement. Work off your emotions in positive ways. Emotionalism has danger in it.

Learn to pray for the right thing, not for deliverance, but for strength for victory. Learn to trust God in all things—in this among others.

If you want to prevent the thing from obsessing you, *you must not let your failures obsess you.* Turn your back on them. The only way to drive out one thought is to put another in. An attempt merely to shut down is doomed to failure. Concentrate on active life and service. The truth is, you cannot have the help of Christ just for the cure of this evil. Give yourself wholly to him, and you will find he has set you free. You cannot bring religion in just for a

part of life. If your whole life is in God's hands this trouble will disappear.

Lastly, a word to the man who is down and out.

God is strong enough and near enough for this never to happen again if you will let him have the whole of you—not body only, but mind and heart and life. But if you do fail again, do not despair, do not blame God, and do not say or think that he has finished with you.

God's love is such that he will never turn from you if you turn to him. God is no farther from the failures than from the successful. He cares as much for those who fail.

The real and ultimate danger of this thing is not danger to your mind and body, but the danger that it may come between you and God. Wherefore come back to God every time.

Remember, whatever the past has held, there are still great possibilities of happiness and victory before you through the power of God.

Others are in as great difficulties, and others who were in them have won through to victory. There is reason for hope.

We are not meant always to stand alone. Two are more than twice as strong as one. Perhaps you should share your difficulty. Only do not make it an excuse for getting mawkish sympathy.

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